



June 24, 2008 • Walnut Grove

The following is a summary of the questions asked and answers given at the Walnut Grove Town Hall meeting hosted by the Resources Agency on June 24, 2008

Q: Why is it so important that these processes concerning the future of the Delta move on a very fast timeline?

A: This problems of dealing with ecosystem in the Delta have been ongoing for 30 years and we've largely avoided the issues as a state. If you look at what's happened to populations of the native fish, they are in terrible shape and that's because we as a society have decided that we don't want to deal with those issues. If we don't face the challenges it's going to continue to deteriorate.

Q: Does the panel acknowledge that the enabling legislation at the state and federal level that authorized the construction of the water projects have guarantees that only water surplus to the needs of the north state would be exported south?

A: What I can tell you is what we're doing in my service area (Zone 7 Water Agency) and what my agency seeks out of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) is the reliability of our existing water supplies. There's no intention to bankrupt or move people out of their homes, their livelihoods, here in the Delta.

Q: I would like to know the transparency of this whole thing. I am a newcomer and I have a huge amount of suspicion of state agencies. I believe there is a hidden agenda. It's not transparent to us common people.

A: There is a lot that we need to do to be more transparent about how we plan to make decisions. We are trying to identify possibilities and trying to do that in a way that just puts things on the table. We have to have a starting point.

Q: I listened very carefully when you were talking about environmental issues and I heard you mention fish, but I didn't hear you mention the invasive species like the water hyacinths. It would seem to me there might be places for the environment to expand if you just cleaned up the mess in the Delta.

A: Certainly invasive species are part of the planning process. They've been recognized as issues because of the changes in the Delta. Some of the flooded islands are perfect places, and this goes to the science question that has come up. We've created situations that are conducive to many of these species by changing the physical conditions. So we are looking at how do we manage the Delta in a way that we can account or address the effective and/or eliminate the effective invasive species.

Q: I'm not a scientist but my understanding is that water hyacinths suck all of the oxygen out of the water. So I kind of wonder what kind of species could it provide to be there.

A: I am not saying that it's good for anything and it's a desirable species at all. We've created many situations that are optimal for these species to occur because of the way the Delta is set up. We need to look at ways to change those to look at restoring some of the natural process to the system.

Q: Maybe things similar to the 10-foot pipe they are putting in at Freeport to pump water out of the Delta. How is it that you can sit here and tell us that we should put things in the wetland when you are already pumping more water out around the Delta?

A: Since none of us here are actually involved in Freeport that's a good question we will need to talk about.

Q: California is an arid state. What the Delta needs is fresh water, and water temperatures that can be maintained to help the fish. The variation of water temperature is doing damage to the fish. If you had more dams, more reservoirs upstream to keep a continuous flow and a flush through the Delta, you wouldn't have the problem that we have right now.

A: The Delta Vision report that came out last December had 12 recommendations. One of their recommendations is we must change the way we think about using water in this state and water use efficiency must drive water policies. They didn't just say that just here for the Delta — they meant that everywhere. The task force also said there is no simple fix to the water problems we have in this state. We need water use efficiency and more storage. They also said that we need to improve the conveyance of water through the state. Now they are working on the strategic plan to implement that report and that's where you can make a difference.

Q: I read the Delta Vision Report and it said one of the problems is property rights and water rights of the residents in the Delta. What have you guys come up with in regards to our property rights in the Delta?

A: There is no recommendation in the report regarding property rights.

Q: Why? That is a huge legal problem for all of you guys. We have property rights to our property and water rights.

A: Their recommendation is not to change the existing water rights structure in this state.

Q: I am really disappointed in the Delta Protection Commission. I don't feel like you're representing the farmers and the land owners at all.

A: The Blue Ribbon Task force came out with recognition of the Delta as a place. I'm not saying that necessarily that draft represents the perspectives of everyone in this room, but I will tell you that it was through the efforts of the commission, people like Mark Wilson and Jeff Hard and others, that

brought about that in addition to the two co-equals. Recognizing the legacy towns, recognizing the importance of agriculture in the Delta and ways perhaps through different transitions, agricultural tourism, ecotourism, were brought about primarily through the efforts of the commission. We are starting at grassroots. Policies are in place under the Delta Protection Act. It's not our prerogative to change those, but it is an opportunity for us to look at those policies in our management plan. One of the examples that I will give is one of the policies: no new wastewater treatment plants in the primary zone. We recognize that there may be some farming aspects that will need new water treatment facilities even though the intent was to put that in place to preclude the development. So it's continuing to evolve.

Q: What is the Delta Vision Task Force going to do in the next four months? This is moving so fast and you didn't say anything about the farmers and the ag tourism and all the things that we're trying to do down here. It's all about the fish and the water. What have you been doing to protect us?

A: At Delta Vision, several of the members were there including people from the Delta on the stakeholder group. We have been at the table, as well as Mike McGowan.

Q: You say you are looking at a big global picture and you are looking at endangered resources and land cannot be recreated. You are going to take away in-production of agriculture, but we are in a world shortage of food and supply.

A: There are four work groups that helped provide the recommendations. The first was governance and finance, the second was an ecosystem work group, the third was the water work group, and the fourth was a Delta work group, the Delta as a place. All the recommendations there are based on those four pieces.

Q: How are you going to replace the ag production that we produce for the world's supply and needs? Are we going to have to fall back and be in the position we are with our fuel needs in relying on other countries?

A: My honest answer to your question is I don't know.

Q: have a question about the farm bureau. They are a member on the steering committee of the BDCP, correct? Were they an original member or did they come on some other time?

A: They came on, but I don't know exactly when. I believe they asked to be included.

Q: I would like to know how many of the 43 Delta vision stakeholder members live in the Delta?

A: I don't have an exact number but I would say about six.

Q: What I really don't understand is this strategic plan, Delta Vision report came out, and were their outreach meetings helped by any of these stakeholders in the Delta before that plan was formulated?

A: To develop the plan itself there were at least two or three meetings in the Delta in the development of the plan and public meetings in Southern California, the Delta and in Sacramento.

Q: This meeting should have happened a year and a half ago. A lot of these issues have been going on for some time. I had to find out about this meeting on the website of the Sacramento Bee.

A: You have an absolutely valid point and this is an issue we have to work on. That is something too that the commission has been working with the other agencies. We do maintain a 300-plus interested parties mailing list to get some of the local interest to the table.

Q: Of all of the billions of dollars that we are seeing spent in this process how much of it has been directed to find a high-volume economical way to desalinate ocean water?

A: I'm probably the largest expert on desalination here. I worked as the general manager of a retail agency in Southern California in the Chino basin area. We built the first brackish water desalter in Southern California. We have built eight more and now have a plant in Orange County where they are taking 50 percent of all their wastewater and recycling it for use not just for irrigation but for drinking. So there have been extraordinary efforts to move ahead with desalination. If you look 50 years ahead, desalination is going to be a much larger part of water supply for coastal communities. The Governor has already called for conservation to reduce per capita usage in urban areas of Southern California and throughout the state. We have to do all of those things.

Q: How will we know that we have communicated with you?

A: I think how we act as we move ahead is probably the best way to judge whether people have listened.

Q: Who gave the Blue Ribbon panel the charge or the postulate that the Southern California water desires were coequal to the rights of the Delta? My other question would be where is local governance in your charge here?

A: For the Blue Ribbon Task Force, the State Legislature passed a bill and the Governor issued the executive order. The charge was to figure out a plan for developing a sustainable Delta.

The Delta Protection Commission asked for a place at this table tonight. Even though we're not involved in many of these processes as the authors, we are involved as a voice for the local entities. With respect to the governance, the commission felt that the makeup of our commission — a 23 member commission with members of the Board of Supervisors from the five Delta counties, city and local representatives, state agencies, and north, south, central and west delta reclamation district water agencies — does provide a local voice. The commission is under the Delta Protection Act.

Q: What do you think happened to the value of property in this community with the way you have handled it? I would like to know how many of the people that drew the map that put 100,000 acres out of production actually walked the ground before they drew the map?

A: There's one map in the Delta Vision documents that shows where habitat could be. Most of the people, though they may not have been on a particular piece of property, are familiar with the Delta. There are significant constraints and we're not going to be doing any of this type of restoration without the participation of the folks that live here and some recognition of what's going to be acceptable and what's not. None of it happens without the engagement of the people that live in the places that we try to do the kinds of things that we're trying to do from an ecosystem perspective.

Q: Question about flood control issues: Why are levee projects taking place in the Delta because of the fear of earthquakes and Katrina when we haven't seen either.

A: I think you touched up on one of the key conflicts with vegetation issues and the U.S Army Core of Engineers. There's a need for a habitat and flood control. Some engineers don't want to deal with habitat issues. They say for a perfect levee we don't want any trees. Part of our FloodSafe program is trying to address this long term, trying to convince the Corps of Engineers in Washington D.C that there is a value for trees on levees and near levees. Let's talk about Katrina, but if you want to hear horror stories talk to the people who got flooded in 1986, 1997, 1955. We have our own horror stories here in the Delta.

Q: If this idea did come to pass, what's going to be the process for acquiring the property? Is it eminent domain? Is it going to be condemned and if so what kind of dollars are we talking? Who is going to determine fair market value?

A: There is a specific process in place. The Department of Water Resources would be responsible for pursuing any of that.

Q: Where is the new Delta Initiatives website?

A: There are two websites. One is www.water.ca.gov/deltainit. That is the Delta initiatives website. There is another website for the Delta Protection Commission. That is www.delta.ca.gov. Both link you to everything.

Q: It is quite obvious that some of the economic considerations have not really been delved into, yet you are proceeding with strategy. My experience is that if you don't have a budget to implement it, it's pretty rough sledding. I represent a group of about 60 wine grape growers and vendors in this area. One of the things that I feel strongly needs to be looked at is the economic impact of what would be destroying by doing that. How can you go ahead with a strategy in four months without doing a very thorough and economic impact report?

A: You can't. We're going to have to figure out if we need to do this restoration, where can we do it with the least impacts, and how do we make a process that works for the fish and for the Delta.

By next year, we will have a draft of the public plan for Delta Vision at the end of next year and then the final draft is at the end of 2010.

Q: A stockpile of rock and material was purchased with flood control money from Proposition 1E. Will it be available only for uses in protecting export water quality and conveyance capacity? Is that the Department's intent for the use of that rock and it won't be available for the general use in the Delta?

A: It was the Department's intent to have that rock available for flood emergencies in the Delta. We will talk about how and when these emergency resources can be made available for the reclamation districts.

Q: When you've talked about ecosystem restoration and restoring species for some reason, I get the feeling that your species and ecosystem is better than the one that we have on dry land. I might like to suggest that in Reclamation District 999 and these other areas that we've got our ecosystem under control. But yet you want to take our area that's under control and it seems to me kind of spread the chaos over another 100,000 acres?

A: We have a process for providing some criteria in ranking, and the fact that species get put on lists under the state and federal Endangered Species Act give them some relative priority over other species that are more common. We can talk about what people consider natural, but there's very little of the natural aquatic environment. And what we've left are channels that don't operate very well in the absence of supporting wetland and inner tidal habitats and flood plain habitats. We have flooded islands that turn into lakes with no tidal velocity in them. When we talk about ecosystem restoration we're looking at trying to bring back some of the historic attributes of the system that made it work the way we perceive it to be in a more desirable way.

Q: Why are they allowing the water hyacinth to take over Stone Lakes refuge? You are going to take out 100,000 acres and you are going to try and manage it when you can't even manage Stone Lake?

A: We have the resources to manage the lands that are associated with the permitting process, which is not the case with many of the lands that we acquire through bond acts. We need to look at designing restorations so that they are self-maintaining to the maximum extent. I would suggest that Stone Lakes has a lot of issues relative to its unnaturalness that complicate their ability to manage it. It's not necessarily a self-sustaining system certainly affected by the areas that surround it.

Q: Can the majority of the Delta ecosystem restoration be achieved with changes to the Yolo Bypass, particularly the weir at the head of the Yolo bypass?

A: I don't think you can achieve all the ecological restoration components by managing just the Yolo Bypass. But there is certainly work that could be done to make it work better from an ecological perspective. We have our own management objectives within the Yolo Bypass.

Q: Have you guys ever considered using the deep water channel as an alternative?

A: There's been a number of efforts to look at both the Sacramento deep water channel as well as the San Joaquin deep water channel and we'll be looking at all kinds of potential improvements. I really do believe that there is significant potential in the southern part of the Delta, lower San Joaquin River where it comes in, to have a flood control bypass that will provide good flood conveyance as well as provide habitat potential.

Q: Who's idea was it to call (the Delta towns) legacy towns?

A: That came out of the Delta Vision task force report. I don't think they meant that as a sign of disrespect at all. They are trying to call attention to the value of the towns, historic value and cultural value.

Q: Is it possible from a biological standpoint to approach this in a multi-step process with cleaning up some of the water issues having to do with the ammonia coming in from Sacramento? My second question is why can't you use some of your budget money to notify stakeholders of meetings like this by mail?

A: That is a really good idea. We were trying to push the cost on to DWR. I think we were trying to look at all the aspect of habitat stressors like ammonia. The Interagency Ecological Program and CALFED have highlighted the concern about ammonia. We are looking at that problem right now and ways to address it.

Q: Delta Vision strategic plan introduction refers to the Delta as the California Delta, but Water Code legal definition is Sacramento San Joaquin Delta. Was that intentional? Is the BDCP process going to comply with all of the laws that exist in the Delta Protection Act as they move forward?

A: I believe the intention to call it the California Delta was in recognition of the importance of the Delta to the state of California. I don't believe there was any disrespect or attempt to change the former name.

Q: Public documents say that the agricultural lands would not be protected by flooding as they had been in the past. Is this a goal or a side issue?

A: I do not know if the response would be the same if the Jones Track levee were to break today. The state has spent in excess of \$100 million to fix a levee and from what our understanding is property values at that fair market value wouldn't come close to what we've spent to fix that levee. Part of the impetus in the investments on Jones Track was the fear on the impact of the water supply system.

Q: There's a railroad levee there. It's a dry levee and they've had failures in that part of the county before. That dry levee that the railroad track sits on actually saved a lot of land out there and the railroad does maintain that dry levee.

A: They maintain the dry levee but they should maintain the wet levees to protect the dry levee.

Q: **But that levee has saved some major flooding from happening down there.**

A: That's good but they should be paying for some protection of their own part.

Q: **Last meeting in Clarksburg we had an audio tape of the meeting and I was wondering what happened to that audio tape? Were they recorded and will this meeting's audio be available to everybody in the Delta?**

A: It is being recorded. It will either be on the DWR website or Resources Agency website.

Q: **Is that just this meeting or all the meetings, because I am concerned about where you are going.**

A: These set of meetings, there are only three. One last night in Suisun City, tonight here and tomorrow night in Stockton. The transcripts for the prior scoping meetings for BDCP are going to be part of the environmental impact report, and I don't know when that is coming out.

Q: **So the questions that we're asking now are those being written up from this audio and given to the EIR?**

A: No, they are two different things. We will listen to the audio and write down the questions and answers. These three meetings were set up to start a dialogue. That's why we called them Town Halls. We committed that we will track all of these questions, have written them down and we will respond and have written answers.